

GRIFFIN PARK, BUILDING NO. 720 (RESIDENTIAL)
520 Callahan Street
Orlando
Orange County
Florida

HABS FL-529-B
FL-529-B

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Griffin Park Building No. 720 (Residential)

HABS No. FL-529-B

Location: 520 Callahan Street, Orlando, Orange County, Florida. Located just north of Griffin Park Residential Building 726 (HABS No. FL-529-C)

Significance: Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1996, the Griffin Park Historic District maintains historical significance in the areas of Community Planning and Development, Politics-Government, Social History and Ethnic Heritage as it exemplifies Post-Depression era attitudes towards segregation and represents low-income housing for the city's black residents. Numerous early twentieth-century Frame Vernacular homes were destroyed to accommodate the construction of Griffin Park; therefore the Griffin Park development symbolized a new direction in the planned growth of the local black community. Architecturally, the Griffin Park Historic District is significant as an example of late-1930s public housing. These Masonry Vernacular buildings represent the architectural style, construction methods, and building materials of the period. In addition, this historic district reflects the design of a team of Orlando's most prominent architects known as the Associated Orlando Architects. This group included local architects such as Arthur Beck, Maurice Kressly, F. Earl DeLoe, Howard M. Reynolds, and Richard Boone Rogers.

Description: The original thirty-one apartment buildings and one administration building in the Griffin Park Historic District were constructed in 1939; however six buildings were moved in 1959 due to the construction of Interstate 4. The remaining twenty-six buildings in the Griffin Park District reflect the Masonry Vernacular style. The one- and two-story buildings have rectangular exterior plans and have a north and south orientation. The historic design of the complex furnished residents with large areas of green space for pedestrian activities. Amenities included benches, a spray pool, sandboxes, and street parking. Today, the green space between the buildings has been maintained and the original intent is evident, however, many of the amenities including the benches, pool, and sandboxes have been removed.

Located in the southeastern portion of the Griffin Park complex, Building No. 720 (formerly 21) faces north and is located directly north of Griffin Park Building No. 726 (HABS No. FL-529-C). This residential building is an example of the one-story type. The concrete brick structural system is set on a continuous concrete block foundation. Fenestration includes metal single-hung multi-light sash types; the original windows were metal multi-light casement windows. Shutters decorate the window bays on the front façade. The low-pitched side-gabled roofs are sheathed with asphalt shingles; they were originally covered with flat concrete tiles. Small shed-roofed entry porches supported by concrete columns are situated over the front door of each unit. In addition, each apartment features a brick chimney piercing the ridge of the gable. Physical modifications to the residential buildings include the replacement of the roofing material and original fenestration.

History: Public housing in Orlando in the mid-1930s was facing many of the same problems other cities throughout the country were facing due to the depression. Economic times were hard

and many people were out of work, which lead to substandard housing being a pressing issue. Prior to 1937, housing the poor had been a public concern, however the government was only involved to the point where restrictions were imposed on private builders to provide sufficient light, circulation, and sanitary facilities. Housing advocates believed it was the government's duty to provide housing for the poor because it was unprofitable for the private sector to do so. After much debate, on September 1, 1937, Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act into existence. In response to this act, the city council of Orlando created the Orlando Housing Authority to conduct a survey of the blighted areas of the city. It was found that in the black neighborhoods of the city, a majority of the homes were substandard. In 1939, Congressman Joe Hendricks requested funds to building a public housing project in Orlando. The site selected was bound by Murphy Street, Division Avenue, Avondale Avenue, and Carter Street. Seventy-six substandard houses were purchased or condemned and then demolished. A local Orlando company, Langston Construction was awarded the contract to the build the "Griffin Park Housing Project," named after Charles Griffin, a former slave who lived in the area. Construction was begun in October of 1939 and was completed the following September.

Sources:

Groover, Amy

1999 Griffin Park Historic District, Holden-Parramore Neighborhood MPS. *National Register of Historic Place Registration Form*.

Bureau of Historic Preservation

1994 Griffin Park Historic District, *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*.

Historian: Robert James Taylor Jr., Janus-Research, March 2006